



For Immediate Release
Thursday, April 14, 2005
Embargoed until 2:30 p.m. EDT

Contact: Chief Deputy Tom Morefield
912-652-4574
Edmund A Booth, Jr, USAO
706-724-0517

U.S. MARSHALS, SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA “OPERATION FALCON”

SAVANNAH, GEORGIA— A most-wanted fugitive got a surprise visit from Deputy U.S. Marshals of the Southern District of Georgia and other law enforcement officers when they arrived in Savannah on April 6, 2005 to arrest him for Possession of Cocaine and Possession of a Weapon by a Convicted Felon. Little did he know that he was just one of thousands of fugitives with active warrants to be rounded up during the nation’s largest fugitive law enforcement mobilization in America’s history—Operation FALCON.

Operation FALCON stands for “Federal And Local Cops Organizing Nationally”. The operation focused on gang related crimes, homicides, sexual assaults, kidnappings, unregistered sex offenders, and crimes against children and the elderly.

Lisa Godbey Wood, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of Georgia, is pleased to announce that the joint fugitive operation was conducted April 4 to 10. Led by the U. S. Marshals and joined by federal, state and local law enforcement, the extraordinary seven-day nationwide sweep netted 10,340 criminal suspects. More than 71 fugitives were arrested in the Savannah area and in the remainder of the Southern District of Georgia, a 43 county area covering from Augusta to the Florida line. Three hundred twenty-two individuals were arrested in Georgia. Wood said that “by removing these fugitives from our neighborhoods, we work to create a safer environment for people to live and raise their families”.

“This was an enormous effort that generated the highest number of arrests ever recorded by a single operation,” said U.S. Marshal Tom Roberts of the Southern District of Georgia. “Locally, the Marshals Service partnered to share this great accomplishment with numerous federal, state and local agencies that dedicated more than 34 deputized officers and 10 other officers to assist us in this seven-day roundup. The most important lesson we have learned since September 11, 2001 is that no single law enforcement agency can solve the problem of violent crime alone. To prevail, we must work as a unified team.” The departments that joined in **Operation FALCON** team are **Savannah Chatham Metro Police Department, Chatham County Sheriff’s Office, Garden City Police Department, Pooler Police Department, Port Wentworth Police Department, Tybee Island Police Department, Georgia Department of Corrections, Georgia State Probation, Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles, Brunswick Police Department, Glynn County Police Department, Glynn County Sheriff’s Office, Charlton County Sheriff’s Office, McIntosh County Sheriff’s Office, Toombs County Sheriff’s Office and Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE).**

During Operation FALCON, warrants were executed on fugitives involved in crimes ranging from drug distribution, aggravated battery on a law enforcement officer to forgery, theft and computer fraud. Offenders were also arrested for child molestation and failure to register as a violent sexual predator. Warrants were executed in numerous counties within the district offering agents and officers a chance to cross jurisdictional lines to make the arrest. Please see the accompanying offense clearance list.

The conclusion of Operation FALCON coincided with the beginning of "National Crime Victims' Rights Week," sponsored by the Department of Justice. The theme of that week long Victims' Rights focus was "Justice isn't served until crime victims are." U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez noted that bringing accused assailants and fugitives to justice is a meaning service to all victims of crime.

By using its unique and historic "special deputation" authority, Marshals are able to draw upon local and state law enforcement personnel, investigators, and deputy sheriffs to assist with its various missions. The agency has only 3,340 deputies nationwide, but deputies marshals carry out such wide-ranging duties as protecting judges and witnesses, transporting prisoners, and managing assets seized by the U.S. courts, in addition to arresting federal fugitives.

Although the United States Marshals Service is one of the smallest federal law enforcement agencies, every year they arrest more fugitives than all other federal agencies combined. Their partnerships with state and local law enforcement and their innovative fugitive hunting tactics routinely score major successes.

Robert J. Finan, head of the agency's Investigative Services Division in Washington, D.C. expressed his deep appreciation to officers from every agency that participated in Operation FALCON.

"This cooperative effort generated the highest number of arrests ever recorded by a single initiative," said Finan, "More than 960 federal, state and local agencies helped us compile a list of the nation's most dangerous fugitives, and then dedicated more than 3000 officers to assist U.S. Marshals in the seven-day roundup."

NOT SINCE THE CIVIL WAR -- A NEW NATIONAL ARREST RECORD

Finan pointed out that this task force was proudly built on 25 years of achievement. "Communities in every state are safer because these violent and desperate fugitives were taken into custody last week. Thanks to Operation FALCON," he said, "I'm confident the number of fugitive captures in 2005 will break every national record since President Lincoln suspended habeus corpus during the Civil War."

PHOTOS/VIDEO AVAILABLE: The Marshals' Office of Public Affairs has photos of actual arrests during the Operation available to press at www.usmarshals.gov, as well as fact sheets on arrests nationwide and in each of the agency's 94 Districts. A five-minute B-roll video package for broadcasters will be available for satellite distribution on April 14 at 2:30 pm EDT (11:30 am PDT) and 4:45 pm EDT (1:45 pm PDT), at these C-Band coordinates IA 6 T-15, Downlink Frequency: 4000 V 93 degrees WL.

#####

11-05